

In Japan, on Tuesday, Secretary Blinken called out the “coercion and aggression” that China deploys at home and abroad. He said this administration will push back on Beijing. That clear-eyed talk is certainly welcome, but it is just the first step.

Walking the walk will mean actually responding in tough ways to espionage and cyber attacks, to violations of human rights, to military bullying, to stealing intellectual property and cheating on trade. If the administration is up to the task, they will find strong partners in this Republican conference.

Here is one big test: Are they willing to keep investing in our own defense?

Our financial commitment to defending America is our most important policy lever in this competition with China. Our allies and adversaries do not heed American Presidents because they are charming or good-looking. The world has respected America for our overwhelming military and economic superiority. When that edge erodes, we invite trouble.

As a share of our economy, American defense spending has fallen significantly, not just from Cold War-era heights but even just recently. Meanwhile, China used its growing prosperity to modernize its military, develop new and longer range weapons to hold U.S. forces at risk from further away, and turn a particular eye towards space and cyber space.

Defense spending is about protecting our homeland. It is about projecting power. It is about preserving global influence, supporting our allies. It is really a barometer of our national will.

It is also about innovation and the future. Many life-changing innovations throughout our economy were first rooted in military R&D.

Unfortunately, reports suggest the Biden administration may plan to freeze defense spending. Of course, that means a reduction, after inflation. Dozens of Democrats are pressuring the administration for even steeper cuts than that. If the administration is serious about competing with China, deterring Russia, and preserving American leadership, the most important test will be in the President's budget submission.

Some of our Senate Democratic colleagues have expressed interest in crafting bipartisan legislation related to China. If any issue is ripe for a regular-order, bipartisan process, it would be that one.

Defense spending is the crucial first step, but there are a whole variety of subjects concerning our competition with China that could benefit from a serious look.

There is bipartisan support for improving security reviews of foreign investment and protecting against forced technology transfer, for cracking down on Chinese espionage and political influence campaigns, for supporting the people of Hong Kong, and human rights, and deterring aggression against Taiwan. There is bipartisan

support for fostering specific industries of national-security importance, such as semiconductors, and for broadly strengthening American R&D.

There is an opportunity for fruitful discussion here. Certainly, this is an area where bipartisanship will be especially crucial, so strategies don't change schizophrenically with every election. As one of our Democratic colleagues said in a hearing yesterday, “the U.S. will not out-compete China . . . with short-term legislation and never-ending uncertainty.”

That is another great argument for not trashing the legislative filibuster. Imagine if every action the Senate takes with national security implications were constantly subject to being wiped clean. While China plans years and decades at a time, our Federal legislation would be reduced to a shelf life of a couple years.

These issues need to be addressed thoughtfully and deliberately. Identifying critical technologies and the best ways to promote and protect advancements needs to be a smart, fact-based process, not a political guessing game or throwing cash at industries with the right connections.

Our work on this front should strengthen our ties with our allies and partners, not try in vain to simply go it alone.

And the Democratic majority must resist the temptation to pile a long list of unrelated policy wishes into a big package and try to label it “China policy.” It would be quite a remarkable coincidence if our Democratic colleagues' vision for a so-called China bill ends up being indistinguishable from a list of things that just happen to delight liberal interest groups.

Getting America on a stronger footing will not require some sweeping far-left transformation of our economy. It will mean continuing to complement the principles and ideas that are our greatest strengths, and it will mean working on these issues the right way, across the aisle.

#### CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

#### EXECUTIVE SESSION

#### EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Katherine C. Tai, of the District of Columbia, to be United States Trade Representative, with the rank of Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

#### TRIBUTE TO ERIC FELDMAN

Mr. PETERS. Madam President, I rise today to pay tribute to an extraordinary public servant and Michigander, Eric Feldman.

Since my first days serving in the U.S. House of Representatives more than 12 years ago, Eric has served as my chief of staff. I still vividly remember him coming to my home just a couple of weeks after my election to interview for the chief of staff position.

I was immediately impressed by his extensive knowledge of American politics and his passion to serve the people of the State of Michigan.

But to fully know Eric is to know his family's story and how it shaped the man he is. All four of his grandparents survived the Holocaust. His maternal grandmother was imprisoned in Auschwitz and Bergen-Belsen, among others. His maternal grandfather was in a forced labor camp in Plaszow. His grandparents met and married in the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp. They were liberated from there and remained after it was converted to a displaced persons camp following World War II. That camp is where Eric's mother was born.

His grandparents and mother immigrated in 1949 to Detroit, where his grandfather worked as a janitor at Ford Motor Company during the day and worked as a tailor at night. His mother won a full scholarship to the University of Michigan from Ford Motor Company as part of a program for employees.

Eric's paternal grandparents fled Poland on the eve of the Nazi German invasion. They survived the war as slave laborers in Siberia, where Eric's father was born. Following the war, they immigrated to Israel before settling in Detroit. Eric's father went to Wayne State University, thanks to the GI bill, after serving honorably in the U.S. Air Force.

After immigrating to Detroit, Eric's family worked hard, and they were able to achieve the American dream. There is no question that their life experience and their journey instilled in Eric a sense of service and devotion to country.

As a freshman Member of Congress, I was fortunate to have Eric on my team. He brought with him extensive political and policy experience, having worked for Congresswoman NITA LOWEY, Leader NANCY PELOSI, and Rahm Emanuel. He built on that experience, leading our office with steady, unwavering leadership, brilliant vision, and wise counsel.

Through four reelections—including my election to the Senate and reelection last year—and many crises impacting Michigan and our country, I entrusted Eric to help ensure that we were able to come together, solve tough problems, and ultimately deliver results. He never flinched. I could always count on Eric to work with our team to develop creative ideas to tackle challenges or empower staff to make

sure that we were on the leading edge of issues critical to Michigan.

He has guided my office through countless high-profile events and crises: the great recession and auto crisis, the Flint water crisis, several government shutdowns, the COVID-19 pandemic, the January 6 attack on the U.S. Capitol, and two impeachment trials. Through it all, Eric has provided stability and focus—a focus on working in a bipartisan manner to pass important legislation and to make progress for Michigan and for our entire country.

Last week, I was humbled to be recognized by the Center for Effective Lawmaking as the most effective Senator in the 116th Congress. Recognition of this sort does not happen without having an incredible team. Eric played a critical role in helping me enact 10 bills into law—the most of any Senator from either party over the last 2 years.

And I know that Eric will tell you, without a doubt, that there is no “I” in team. As a leader, Eric has focused on hiring talented staff, both in DC and across Michigan, staff that humbly, selflessly, and effectively serve the people of Michigan each and every day. With Eric’s laser focus on what is best for Michigan, together with our team, we have secured record funding to protect the Great Lakes, worked to increase security at our Nation’s borders, expanded apprenticeships and skills training, saved taxpayer dollars, and made the Federal Government more efficient, all the while standing up for Michigan workers, including those working in our auto industry.

Eric is always on the leading edge, and he has distinguished himself through his work with Michigan’s auto manufacturers and automotive stakeholders. In particular, Eric has helped drive policy efforts focused on innovation and emerging technologies so that in the near future, self-driving vehicles will not only be safely deployed and save thousands of lives on our highways but also be developed and built in Michigan and in the United States, creating good-paying jobs for the next generation of workers.

At every step of the way, through all of his hard work, Eric has carried himself with his characteristic enthusiasm and passion. It is only fitting, as an alum of the University of Michigan and a fervent—very fervent—Wolverine fan, he has, and I quote, an “enthusiasm unknown to mankind.” Whether it is policy, politics, casework, or an issue important to constituents, there is no doubt that Eric approaches it with keen interest and with high energy and that he will think through every single possible angle.

But Eric has been much more than just a chief aide. Colleen and I feel incredibly fortunate not only for all that Eric has done to lead my office and deliver for the people of Michigan; we count on him as a confidant and a dear friend.

Eric, you will be missed dearly as you depart for your next endeavor in

the private sector. But I am grateful for what you have built, and I know that it will endure—a culture of teamwork, hard work, productivity, and a commitment to what is best for Michiganders.

Eric, Colleen and I know that you have devoted countless hours to a job that you love while balancing the two most important roles in your life: being a loving husband and a father. I have been proud to watch you celebrate many of life’s milestones over the years, including the birth of your two beloved sons, and I will certainly never forget your eldest son Avi’s birthday on November 4, 2014, the day Michiganders elected me to the U.S. Senate.

Eric, Colleen and I wish you much success, and we hope you enjoy this next chapter with Dena, Avi, and Ethan. Know that Colleen and I will always be thankful beyond measure for your service and for your leadership and that you will forever be part of Team PETERS.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from South Dakota.

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that I be able to complete my remarks before the vote.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

(The remarks of Mr. THUNE pertaining to the introduction of S. 797 are printed in today’s RECORD under “Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.”)

Mr. THUNE. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

Mrs. MURRAY. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to complete my remarks before the vote is called.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mrs. MURRAY. And for the information of the Senators, I will speak for about 7 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Thank you.

#### GEORGIA SHOOTING

Mrs. MURRAY. Madam President, I would like to start by taking a moment to address the awful violence we saw in Georgia yesterday.

Everyone, especially elected officials, needs to not just speak out but to act against this deadly display of hate.

To the victims and their families and to the Asian-American and Pacific-Islander community in Washington State and nationwide, my heart is with you not just today but going forward. I will continue sending a strong message that hate against you must stop, and I will keep working to ensure your safety in light of the terrible surge in hate crimes we have seen in our State and across the country.

#### NOMINATION OF XAVIER BECERRA

Now, Madam President, I rise today to voice my strong support for Attorney General Becerra to serve as Secretary of Health and Human Services.

After 4 years of attacks on families’ healthcare from President Trump,

after a year of this pandemic ravaging our Nation, the challenges that lie ahead of us, especially when it comes to healthcare, are numerous; they are enormous; and they are absolutely urgent.

The uninsured rate, the drug prices, and healthcare costs have all skyrocketed. Confidence in our public health agencies have plummeted. Already painful health inequities have grown deeper. And this pandemic has absolutely devastated communities and pushed our healthcare system to the brink.

COVID-19 has killed over a half a million people, and that number continues to rise. When it comes to the hard work ahead to not only end this pandemic but rebuild a stronger and fairer country, it is clear we need an experienced leader at the Department of Health and Human Services. It is clear we don’t have a second to waste, and it is clear Attorney General Becerra is the right pick for this job.

His track record shows he has the convictions and the qualifications for the task at hand. As a Member of Congress for over two decades, he has proven himself a skilled legislator who understands healthcare policy. As attorney general of one of the Nation’s largest justice departments, he has proven himself as a leader capable of heading a complex Department like HHS. And throughout all of his work, he has proven himself as a champion for patients and public health.

In Congress, he worked to help more people get quality, affordable healthcare by passing the Children’s Health Insurance Program and the Affordable Care Act. In California, he has fought in court to defend the Affordable Care Act and time and time again has gone to court to fight for patients, like when he won a \$70 million settlement from pharmaceutical companies for blocking cheaper generic drugs from market, when he won a settlement from opioid manufacturers behind the addiction crisis and joined a bipartisan investigation into whether opioids were unlawfully marketed, when he sued e-cigarette companies from marketing tobacco products to children and led a bipartisan effort with the Republican attorney general of Nebraska to protect kids from tobacco imagery, or when he worked to investigate companies and hold them accountable for putting workers at risk by failing to follow COVID-19 safety measures.

Attorney General Becerra has also worked to acknowledge and address issues driving inequities in healthcare. As leader of California’s Department of Justice, he fought in court against the Trump administration rule that undermined care for the LGBTQ community, against the administration’s constant efforts to undermine reproductive healthcare and against its blatant disregard for the well-being of migrant children.

Attorney General Becerra also established a new Bureau of Disability